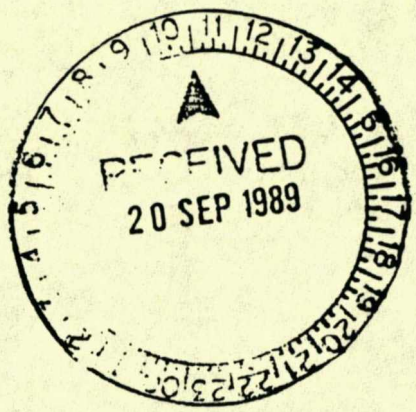
TL 2927

SENATOR THE HON. GARETH EVANS Q.C.

MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TRADE
PARLIAMENT HOUSE
CANBERRA A.C.T. 2600



Mr Russell Rollason
Executive Director
Australian Council for
Overseas Aid
GPO Box 1562
CANBERRA ACT 2601

18 SEP 1989

Dear Mr Rollason

Thank you for your letter dated 6 July concerning reports of recent detentions in East Timor and, in particular, for the list of names of some of the people who were alleged to have been detained.

As you mentioned in your letter, it is often difficult to obtain detailed information concerning such allegations in respect of East Timor. My Department has, however, investigated the reports and checked the information provided by ACFOA with sources in Indonesia. Information from our Embassy supports the ACFOA information that possibly as many as 40 people have been detained in recent months in East Timor, and that the detentions have been largely confined to Dili and Baucau.

We also believe that most of the twelve people referred to in ACFOA's facsimile message of 16 June were in fact detained in East Timor. But the latest information we have indicates that most, including Manuel Guterres, may now have been released. My Department will pass on further information on these cases if and when it comes to hand.

ACFOA also raised with my Department, in a facsimile message of 15 June, the matter of the East Timorese students who sought asylum in the Apostolic Nunciature and the Japanese Embassy in Jakarta in June. As you are no doubt aware, the six students subsequently left these diplomatic missions of their own accord following a guarantee from Foreign Minister Alatas that they would not be arrested nor would action be taken against them or their families in East Timor.

Your letter asked me to take up the issue of the reports of detentions in East Timor directly with General Try Sutrisno during his visit to Australia in July. Unfortunately, as I was overseas at the time I did not have an opportunity to meet General Sutrisno. However, I did raise the issue of human

rights in Indonesia, with specific reference to East Timor, with Indonesian Foreign Minister Alatas when he visited Australia in March.* I expect to see him again at the United Nations' General Assembly in New York in October.

I look forward to keeping in touch with you on these matters and I am particularly glad that ACFOA has been able to cooperate with my Department in the investigation of these reports.

Yours sincerely

GARETH EVANS

* and also met from Hon. Ali Alatas during his recent visit to Australia.